

Are all drugs addictive?

It depends on what we mean by addiction.

People can become psychologically dependent on any drug or anything else for that matter. This means that the person using drugs feels they cannot cope or face the world unless they are under the influence of drugs. This form of dependency has more to do with the people using the drug rather than about the particular drug they are taking.

In contrast people can only become physically dependent on certain drugs. Physical dependency results from the repeated, heavy use of drugs like heroin, tranquillisers and alcohol. Heavy and continual use of these drugs can change the body chemistry so that if someone does not get a repeat dose they suffer physical withdrawal symptoms - the shakes, flu like effects. They have to keep taking the drug just to stop themselves from feeling ill.

Continual use of drugs like cannabis, ecstasy and LSD does not result in physical dependency, even though people may become psychologically dependent. With other drugs and particularly stimulant drugs such as cocaine, crack, amphetamine and the nicotine in cigarettes there is debate over the extent that physical dependence can occur.

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[What is addiction?](#) Addiction means that a large part of a person's life is devoted to buying and taking drugs.